

Message Text

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SUBJ: POLITICS SET TO MUSIC

1. THAILAND'S BIGGEST HIT SONG HAS BECOME A POLITICAL LEITMOTIF IN RECENT WEEKS. THE TUNE, COMPOSED BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE ROYAL THAI ARMY BAND, HAS THE TITLE "NAK PHAEN DIN", VARIOUSLY TRANSLATED AS "HEAVY ON THE GROUND" OR "SCUM OF THE EARTH". IT HAS THE LITERAL SENSE OF "TOO HEAVY A BURDEN FOR OUR HOMELAND TO BEAR". ALTHOUGH THE SONG HAS BEEN USED BY ACTIVISTS ON THE LEFT AS WELL, ITS LYRICS, WHICH REFER TO "AGITATION OF THE MASSES" AND "THE PROTECTION OF HIS MAJESTY'S GOLDEN BO TREE" LEND THEMSELVES MORE READILY TO IDENTIFICATION WITH THE CONSERVATIVE AND ROYALIST ELEMENT IN THAI SOCIETY. WITHIN THE PAST TWO WEEKS THE SONG HAS BEEN HEARD ON NUMEROUS RADIO AND TELEVISION PROGRAMS HAVING A SUFFICIENT AURA OF OFFICIAL SPONSORSHIP TO GIVE RISE TO THE SUSPICION THAT ITS USE WAS MORE THAN COINCIDENTAL. A ROUGH TRANSLATION OF THE LYRICS FOLLOWS:

TOO HEAVY A BURDEN FOR OUR LAND

HE WHO CALLS HIMSELF A THAI AND WHO LOOKS LIKE A THAI,
HE WHO SHELTERS UNDER HIS MAJESTY'S GOLDEN BO TREE,
AND YET STILL WISHES TO DESTROY OUR LAND.
HE WHO VIEWS THAIS AS SLAVES AND DESPISES OUR RACE AND KINGDOM,
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HE IS TOO HEAVY A BURDEN FOR OUR LAND.

HE WHO INCITES HIS FELLOW THAIS TO DISUNITE THEM,
HOPING THEY WILL BECOME DIVIDED AND SCATTERED;
HE WHO AGITATES THE MASSES TO CREATE SHAOS,
AND CAUSES THAIS TO FIGHT OTHER THAIS;
HE WHO PRAISES OTHER NATIONS AND ALLOWS THEM TO OPPRESS HIS OWN,
HE WHO IS SUPPORTED BY OTHER NATIONS,
AND OBEYS THEM AS IF THEY WERE HIS OWN LAND,
HE IS TOO HEAVY A BURDENT FOR OUR LAND.
HE WHO SELLS BOTH HIMSELF AND HIS NATION AND WHERE HE CAN,
SUBVERTS HIS LAND TO PREPARE IT FOR ATTACK BY OTHERS;
HE WHO HAS EVIL INTENTIONS AND DENIES THAI TRADITIONS,
WHO SUPPORTS EVIL IDEOLOGIES AND HOLLIGANISM,
AND PROPAGATES SUCH IDEAS IN OUR OWN LAND,
HE IS TOO HEAVY A BURDEN FOR OUR LAND.

2. WHICHEVER SIDE SUCCEEDS IN MAKING THE SONG ITS OWN,
IT IS A PLEASANT CHANGE TO HAVE THE LOCAL POLITICAL
POLEMICS PACKAGED IN A SNAPPY OMM-PAH FORMAT.
WHITEHOUSE

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